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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000640

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [OSCE](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: HLTF: NATO ALLIES READY TO STAY THE COURSE ON CFE  
REF: STATE 166711 (GUIDANCE)

Classified By: A/DCM W.S. Reid for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### SUMMARY

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1. (C) At the December 14 HLTF all NATO Allies - without exception - called for a continuation of NATO's unified response to Russia's unilateral actions on CFE and urged that the U.S. keep its "parallel actions" package on the table for negotiation with Russia. Praise for U.S. efforts to date was accompanied by pleas from several Allies for continued or increased transparency and consultation as negotiations with Russia go forward. On practical questions relating to Allies, response over time to Russia's "suspension" of CFE implementation, the response was equally consistent.

-- All Allies who spoke did so in terms of a step-by-step approach to developing a collective response to Russia's suspension. The first step - a unified public reaction regretting Russia's action and pledging continued openness to dialogue - had already been accomplished via NATO's agreed statement on December 12. Step two - observation of the impact of Russia's "suspension" - would require what would amount to weeks or months; assessment and reaction would be step three.

-- A large number of Allies had reflected on key benchmarks for the first quarter of 2008. They underscored the criticality of political considerations - such as Russian presidential elections in March and the Bucharest Summit in April, as well as Russia's response (or failure to respond) to the parallel actions package on the table - that would need to be considered in "step 2" in determining an effective timeline for a longer term response.

-- On CFE implementation by NATO, all Allies who spoke said NATO would be best positioned to advance discussion of a solution with Russia and win the public diplomacy battle if Allies continued to take the high road on CFE implementation, fulfilling CFE obligations ourselves even if Russia did not.

-- While no Ally disagreed with that view, several suggested that it would be useful to review Russia's actions and NATO's tactical approach at intervals prior to Bucharest. For most, an initial late January review of the impact of Russia's suspension made sense, and an HLTF will be scheduled to accommodate that.

-- For its part, the U.S. promised to report Allies' thinking to Washington; endorsed the need for a unified NATO

approach and an effective common line throughout this period and in Bucharest; and expressed appreciation for Allies, consistent support of the parallel actions package, which remains on the table.

¶2. (C) An extended discussion on managing Russian participation in the CFE Joint Consultative Group yielded one conclusion: unless Russia withdrew from the CFE Treaty, it retained the right to participate in JCG discussions. Allies should neither plead with Russia to attend future JCG sessions, nor seek to abridge that Treaty right. Care must also be taken to ensure that nothing done in the JCG appears to legitimize the Russian decision to cease implementation of the Treaty.

¶3. (C) Allies also used the HLTF to share information on steps they had taken nationally in response to the Russian suspension. Four Allies (Romania, UK, U.S., and Turkey) said they had already sent, or would send, diplomatic notes to the depositary protesting the Russian suspension. Several also indicated that they had or would issue national statements commenting on the Russian action, but underscored that those would be consistent with the NATO statement agreed December ¶12.

¶4. (U) Next steps: The International Staff (IS) was tasked to produce a paper addressing the key benchmarks and technical issues that will come into play in the coming months as a basis for the late January HLTF discussion; the I.S. will also develop a plan to exploit opportunities to express NATO solidarity over the coming months through a solid public diplomacy effort. The next HLTF is likely to take place in the last week of January, with subsequent meetings monthly in the run-up to Bucharest.

End Summary.

#### ----- Contacts and Bilaterals -----

¶5. (C) Turkish rep Ahmet Gun noted that the Russian CHOD had sent a letter to the Turkish CHOD requesting confirmation of Turkish support for the Russian position on the flank. This disclosure met with stunned silence followed by universal laughter over Russian brazenness. Gun indicated that Russia would receive a response clearly outlining the actual Turkish position. He noted Turkey expected to host consultations with DFM Kislyak later in December (previously postponed). Italy reported on a meeting between the Italian Vice Minister and DFM Grushko that involved a short exchange on CFE during which Grushko reiterated well-known Russian positions and disputed any linkage of Russia's Istanbul commitments to the Treaty. The Chair, Robert Simmons, reported that in his separate consultations with Armenia and Azerbaijan on CFE (in which he had argued that neither should mimic Russia's course on suspension), Armenian authorities had indicated that Russia had assured them it would allow inspections of its stationed forces on Armenian territory.

#### ----- -- The Way Ahead - Unified Message and Next Steps -----

¶6. (C) CFE PARALLEL ACTIONS PACKAGE: U.S. rep VCI DAS Karin ¶1. Look summed up the status of U.S.-Russian discussions per reftel, indicating that the U.S. was waiting for a Russian contribution to the current text of the parallel actions paper (on Moldova). She said A/S Fried did not expect that a follow on U.S.-Russian bilateral meeting would take place until January, particularly given the holiday period. Look underscored U.S. appreciation for Allies, contributions and support during the last months, but especially at the Madrid and Brussels Ministerial meetings.

-- Without exception, all Allies who spoke on this issue (France, UK, NETH, RO, BELG, CZ, GER, HU, BU, Italy, LUX,

Greece, Lith, Den, Estonia, Slovenia, and CAN) supported keeping the U.S. CFE package on the table as the only viable option to resolve the CFE impasse.

-- Many recalled that the package was a constructive, generous offer that represented the limit of NATO flexibility. Several asked for a continuation of regular U.S. briefings on the package. Bulgaria and Turkey said they would like the opportunity to review any changes to the package before the next iteration was presented to Russia.

¶17. (C) Timeline for moving forward: HLTF Chairman Simmons recalled that previous HLTF discussion had focused on the French idea of a phased or step-by-step approach to responding to the Russian suspension. NATO,s unified public statement had sent a message of regret at Russia,s action and continued NATO commitment to CFE. He said that NATO,s public statement that it would fulfill data exchange obligations despite Russia,s approach had taken the diplomatic high ground. French rep Camille Grand recalled that the next stage in the phased process should be an observation of Russia,s actions regarding CFE implementation and related issues, such as their engagement (or not) with the U.S. in negotiations on a package resolution. The third step would be an assessment of the impact of Russia,s actions, and consideration of NATO,s next steps. Grand made clear that these two stages might overlap; it would be difficult to say how long each phase should last. What was important was for NATO to keep the high ground; keep pushing for a constructive resolution of the CFE impasse; monitor developments; take Russia to task for any implementation failures; and stay unified.

¶18. (C) Grand introduced into this phased approach two benchmarks and an idea: he observed that it was hard to believe that a resolution on CFE would be possible prior to the Russian Presidential election. While we could not say definitively that Russia would be ready to negotiate at that time, he argued, it was probably fair to say that a breakthrough would not happen earlier. If Russia continued to engage the U.S. in negotiations, this would be a good sign, but NATO would need to think about 1) how to position ourselves to maximize prospects for progress on CFE after the election; and 2) how to manage CFE so that it was a positive element, not a distraction, at Bucharest. He suggested Allies could consider using Bucharest to call for a CFE Extraordinary Conference in order to create a framework for resolution or Russian re-engagement in CFE implementation. Alternatively, an extraordinary conference might occur between the Russian election and Bucharest (subsequent to the meeting, several Allies privately suggested that the calendar made this latter scenario somewhat unrealistic).

¶19. (C) Several Allies endorsed the idea that NATO should treat the Russian elections and Bucharest as key benchmarks in our strategy for managing CFE in 2008 (Ger, FR, UK, IT, GR, DN LX, PO). The German and UK reps (Biontino and Ford) argued that it made sense for NATO to continue to implement the Treaty and hold the high ground on this matter while we were seeking to negotiate a resolution. Ford echoed Look in arguing that it would be essential for Allies to keep close account of Russia,s failures of Treaty implementation, and use the JCG as a place to take Russia to task, since we did not recognize Russia,s suspension as legitimate.

¶10. (C) Look noted, per reftel, that it would be important to keep account of Russia,s actions with regard to CFE implementation from a number of perspectives: whether Russia provided routine notifications and received inspections was important, but we would also need to monitor whether Russia engaged in any troop movements that might be contrary to Treaty provisions. Politically as well as militarily, if Russia moved armor into the flank this would be a serious concern that would necessarily affect our approach; if Russia failed to re-engage the U.S. on the parallel actions plan this would likewise be a negative message that we would need to take into account.

¶11. (C) Romania (Micula) was an unlikely ally in the call for a step-by-step approach and continued implementation of CFE by NATO. Micula said NATO should maintain the high ground on this issue for the time being, continue negotiating on the U.S.-Russia track, and keep good records. He agreed that the benchmarks identified by France, Germany, and the UK were important, but Treaty implementers (in Romania) would want a review of the status of Russian implementation after 6-12 weeks. Canada, Turkey, Poland, Romania, and the UK agreed on both the need for a review of Russian implementation, and consideration of a longer term plan that took NATO to Bucharest while holding the high ground.

¶12. (C) No Plan B: The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Turkey, the UK, Germany, Belgium, and Italy highlighted another aspect of longer term thinking: the sense that if we lose the CFE Treaty, it will be impossible to replace it. For many Allies, in particular those who see their security directly affected by the Treaty's status (e.g. Turkey and Norway), NATO's primary goal should be to save the CFE Treaty. Public diplomacy and implementation choices should be geared to promote that outcome. The Netherlands said it most sharply: the U.S. parallel actions plan is generous and creative, and offers not only the best, but likely the only, way to save CFE. NATO should stay unified behind the plan, hold the high ground on implementation, and see whether Russia will at some point (perhaps after the elections, Biontino noted) be prepared to negotiate a resolution.

#### Technical Issues

¶13. (C) Implementation: All Allies who spoke called for NATO to retain the high ground on CFE implementation by continuing the routine exchange of notifications and conduct of inspections. No Ally suggested that NATO Allies should cease routine Treaty implementation. No Ally suggested moving up NATO's next inspection in Russia in order to test the moratorium early. Those who addressed the inspection issue said that NATO should adhere to its current inspection schedule, and keep account of Russia's response. Romania said that Allies would also need to develop an approach on Treaty-related outreach issues: should Russia be barred from access to NATO's CFE database (Verity), which is open to all Treaty partners? (In a private bilateral meeting with the U.S., Micula said his personal view was that keeping Russia out of NATO outreach on CFE was a bad idea, but he might get pressure from Treaty implementers to do so.)

¶14. (C) Russia in the JCG. With regard to Russian participation in the JCG post-suspension, Turkey and Spain sought an HLTF view on how to respond to Russia's lobbying in Vienna for some form of written assurances that Russia's participation in the JCG will not be contested. The Czech Republic and Slovakia were isolated in their call for creative ways of minimizing Russian participation in the JCG. Almost all who spoke (US, FR, UK, BE, RO, CA, LUX, IT, DE, HU, GR, PL, BU, SP, NL) advocated the benefit of Russia's participation for continued dialogue and a means to officially note concerns with compliance issues.

-- No Ally supported any form of an invitation because Russia remains a State Party to the Treaty with the right, and some believe the obligation, to attend the JCG. Care must be taken to avoid the risk that any statement appears to legitimize the Russian "suspension."

-- The Spanish rep noted that Spain in its capacity as Chairman of the JCG intended to factually note at the December 18 JCG that there would be no change in procedure, participation and contributions of future JCG meetings and this statement would be appended to the Journal of the Day. Some (RO, CA, US, UK) noted there was no need for even a statement and supported a UK idea of simply ensuring Russia received the agenda for the next meeting; all agreed any form of statement could not include an invitation to Russia specifically or any mention of suspension, and many rejected any solution that required a JCG consensus. The Chair noted

that all wanted Russia to continue to participate and deferred to the delegations in Vienna, primarily Spain as the JCG Chair, to finalize a response consistent with the concerns discussed.

#### Baltics Harden the Message

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¶15. (C) Estonian rep Kolgas welcomed Allies' support for a unified NATO position on issues relating to their eventual accession to Adapted CFE, and looked forward to intra-Alliance consultations. On behalf of the three Baltics, he tabled a paper sketching Baltic thinking on accession. In the HLTF plenary the paper (which was not shown to the U.S. during an hour-long meeting the previous day with DOD experts) drew no immediate reaction. On the margins, however, several Allies (notably Germany) expressed consternation, arguing that this "unified Baltic position" would be impossible to negotiate with Russia. The Baltic paper (text below) insists that the Adapted CFE Treaty's Exceptional Temporary Deployment provision must be available to the Baltics: the ETD equals two divisions per country; the flank temporary deployment provision, in contrast, involves a heavy brigade. German rep Biontino commented privately to the U.S. that "NATO doesn't have 6 divisions available in Europe... but if the Russians see this they will say it's a huge step back from the parallel actions approach."

#### ----- Meetings on the Margins -----

¶16. (C) Look and team met on the margins with the UK, France, and Germany; Canada; Romania; Turkey; and the Baltic States. In most cases these meetings echoed the main themes outlined above. In the "Quad" meeting, German and French reps decried comments by Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and the Baltics at Madrid and in NATO discussion of the NAC communique which seemed to call into question NATO's unified support for the parallel actions plan. The U.S. noted this concern, but underscored that we regarded Allies, overall message of support as a key to potential progress.

¶17. (C) Baltic States. At the request of U.S. rep Look, Mr. Powell Moore, SECDEF Rep to the OSCE, hosted a meeting with Baltic states to discuss A/CFE accession planning. The meeting focused on ongoing NATO IS efforts and planned US bilateral military planning with the Baltics.

-- Moore emphasized the importance of this effort and the commitment of the U.S., and as a practical matter, the DOD. U.S. bilateral contacts will support NATO efforts to make sure that this process meets the needs of our Allies and the Alliance. Tony Aldwell, OSD-P, outlined the DOD plan. He stated that the U.S. is sensitive to the Baltics, situation. He said that this will be defense planning with a military focus. We are committed to helping the Baltics and supporting their interests. He said that DASD Dan Fata plans to initiate this process next month and USEUCOM will lead the technical discussions.

-- Aldwell outlined the three key aspects: 1) helping Baltics establish appropriate NCs, TCs, and temporary deployment levels; 2) helping Baltics balance homeland defense and expeditionary capabilities; and 3) assisting the NATO IS effort by providing complementary planning. LTC Steve Olejasz, JS, said that NATO IS had begun their planning efforts and had invited each Baltic state to schedule initial meetings. He said that this process follows from the visit U.S. HLTF rep Look and team made to Vilnius in August where they met with all three Baltic states. Olejasz emphasized today and during the August meeting that Baltic security needs and Alliance requirements would have to be considered when the Baltics undertook their A/CFE accession requirements. This is an A/CFE requirement that demands operational planning analysis.



-- All the Baltic reps were very pleased with this process thus far and welcomed U.S. offer of assistance. Latvia said that national security was their priority and that CFE was part of the process. They offered to host the first DOD meeting in Riga. Lithuania expressed appreciation for U.S. sensitivities to Baltic concerns. They are not members of CFE and do not want the Baltics to be seen as "scapegoats" for A/CFE problems. Estonia said it supported the process and asked for a "roadmap" once the details were worked out. All the Baltics expressed support for the balanced approach of NATO and U.S. planning assistance and were willing to work with the U.S. as a group and bilaterally as required.

-- After a few references by the Baltics to contingency planning, Aldwell and Olejarsz reminded the Baltics that NATO does not do contingency planning. The NATO IS and USEUCOM efforts will provide sufficient information to allow them to meet their requirements. In a follow on meeting between the IS and U.S. HLTF mil reps it was clear that very little action had occurred on the IS efforts concerning Baltic discussions with NATO pursuant to the parallel action plan.

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Next HLTF Meeting  
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¶18. (SBU) Dates for the next HLTF meeting were left open with the IS proposing January 24 and several Allies indicating that the following week (31st) would perhaps be preferable in order to allow us to collect information on Russia's actions and to allow for the possibility of another meeting on the parallel actions plans. There was also interest expressed in scheduling HLTF meetings around every four weeks until Bucharest.

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Text of Baltic Non-PAPER  
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Begin text:

Nonpaper

Joint position of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania concerning their eventual accession to the Adapted CFE Treaty

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania find Russia's decision to suspend the implementation of the CFE Treaty as detrimental to arms control principles, confidence and security in Europe.

On a number of occasions Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have expressed their readiness to enter into negotiations on potential accession to the Adapted CFE Treaty as soon as it has entered into force.

The eventual accession to the Adapted CFE Treaty can only be voluntary, based on national security interests. The future membership in the Adapted CFE Treaty should enhance the security and stability in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and in the wider European security context.

The terms of accession should first be discussed and agreed within NATO, with a view to reaching a NAC decision on accession criteria and territorial ceilings for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The consultations within NATO should follow the set of principles Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider important:

- the process should be guided by:

-- long-term defence development plans of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and their commitments in the Alliance;

-- the principles of collective defence as defined in the Article V of the Washington Treaty;

-- NATO's joint capabilities-based defence planning process.

- all three nations are still building up their defence forces and the accession should not impede the long-term development of their defence capabilities;
- the application of general flexibility mechanism as set forth in the Adapted CFE Treaty, including the right to immediate and full access to exceptional temporary Deployment;
- the accession terms have to be in balance with the terms of other State Parties and non-discriminatory with respect to possible new acceding states.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider that before the adapted CFE Treaty has entered into force, it is premature to enter into negotiations on their accession modalities with any non-NATO party to the CFE Treaty.

NULAND